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SIPDIS

STATE FOR G/TIP, EUR/NB

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SUBJECT: FINLAND: PROPOSED RESIDENCY PERMITS FOR TIP
VICTIMS

11. (U) Officials at the Interior Ministry told Poloff that they intend to draft a proposed amendment to Finland's "Aliens Act" that would allow trafficking-in-persons victims to receive temporary residency permits. The proposed permits would allow TIP victims to remain in Finland for up to one year. Victims could work and receive social security benefits (health and housing assistance, etc.) during that time, and the permits could be extended beyond the initial year. Permit holders would also be eligible to apply for permanent residency status based on employment or other factors. Eligibility for the proposed residency permits would be based on at least some cooperation with Finnish law enforcement officials investigating the victim's case. The exact nature of such cooperation is still under consideration. The MoI said that the proposed amendment would be vetted by Finland's inter-agency TIP working group before submission to Parliament and the Government. Little opposition is expected, and the MoI hopes the amendment can be enacted sometime next year.

12. (U) Comment: This is an important step for Finland, both in terms of providing greater protection for TIP victims and in terms of increasing investigations, prosecutions, and convictions. The biggest gap in Finland's protection measures to this point has been the GoF's policy of quickly deporting TIP victims from certain countries like Russia and Ukraine (although in practice, the policy was not always enforced). Extending residency permits to TIP victims was one of the chief recommendations in Finland's new National Action Plan, and the MoI's quick action on the issue is a positive sign that the GoF is serious about the plan's implementation. The protection provided will also give incentive to assist the police in prosecuting traffickers.

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